

Northeastern University
Dukakis Center *for* Urban & Regional Policy

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL (EDSAT)

**EDSAT REPORT FOR THE TOWN OF
GRAFTON, MASSACHUSETTS
OCTOBER 2016**



THE PARTNERS

About the Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy

The Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University conducts interdisciplinary research, in collaboration with civic leaders and scholars both within and beyond Northeastern University, to identify and implement real solutions to the critical challenges facing urban areas throughout Greater Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the nation. Founded in 1999 as a “think and do” tank, the Dukakis Center’s collaborative research and problem-solving model applies powerful data analysis, a bevy of multidisciplinary research and evaluation techniques, and a policy-driven perspective to address a wide range of issues facing cities and towns. These issues include affordable housing, local economic development, workforce development, transportation, public finance, and environmental sustainability. The staff of the Dukakis Center works to catalyze broad-based efforts to solve urban problems, acting as both a convener and a trusted and committed partner to local, state, and national agencies and organizations. The Dukakis Center is housed within Northeastern University’s School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs.

About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities is the nation’s oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for more than 1,600 member cities and the 49 state municipal leagues, representing 19,000 cities and towns and more than 218 million Americans. Through its Center for Research and Innovation, NLC provides research and analysis on key topics and trends important to cities, creative solutions to improve the quality of life in communities, inspiration and ideas for local officials to use in tackling tough issues and opportunities for city leaders to connect with peers, share experiences, and learn about innovative approaches to urban governance.

For additional information about the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT), please visit <http://www.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter/econdev/edsat> or contact:

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INTRODUCTION

A robust, sustainable, and adaptable local economy depends heavily on public officials who can lead in forming and implementing an economic development strategy. A thorough strategy of local governance is developed with an understanding of local business interests and regional resource availability, and a careful assessment of the community's ability to attract new business investment and jobs. Participating in the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) is an important step public officials can take to assess their jurisdictions'¹ strengths and weaknesses for the purpose of planning for viable, long-term economic growth. Through EDSAT, public officials and business leaders collaborate as a team, assessing each of their roles in creating a business-friendly climate.

By participating in this self-assessment, Grafton will not simply better understand its economic development assets and challenges, but learn to build upon strengths and overcome weaknesses. This report contains a thorough analysis of the responses provided by Grafton to the EDSAT questionnaire.

The Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy will keep all individual-municipality results in this report strictly confidential.

Project Overview

Since 2005, Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (Dukakis Center) has sought to identify the "deal-breakers" that impede private investment in local municipalities. Based upon research on the resurgence of older industrial cities, the Dukakis Center has identified two crucial elements in economic development. First is a municipality's ability to respond opportunely to ever-changing market forces. Second is local government's skill in working collaboratively with regional agencies, business leaders, and academic institutions to lessen municipal weaknesses and market the city or town's strengths. These conclusions led to the development of EDSAT, an analytical framework for providing practical, actionable feedback to public officials. In its current form, EDSAT resulted from a partnership between the Dukakis Center and the National League of Cities (NLC).

Methodology

The foundation for the 200-plus questions that make up the EDSAT questionnaire was established when the Dukakis Center surveyed more than 240 members of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, now known as NAIOP and CoreNet Global. These leading professional associations represent site and location experts, whose members research new sites for businesses and other institutions. Members were asked to identify those factors that are most important to businesses and developers when evaluating locations. This process generated a set of 38 broad factors relevant to economic growth and development. Examples include highway access, available workforce, and the timeliness of permit reviews. Based on rankings by these location experts, EDSAT factors are identified as *Very Important*, *Important*, or *Less Important* to businesses and developers. We denote these rankings as follows: A filled circle (●) indicates *Very Important*, a half-filled circle (◐) indicates *Important*, and an unfilled circle (○) indicates *Less Important*.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EDSAT LOCATION FACTORS

¹ Jurisdictions are usually categorized as individual towns and/or cities. A "jurisdiction" can also consist of several small municipalities, a geographic region, or a county—as long as each plans and strategizes its economic development efforts as a single entity.

Very Important ● <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Access • Parking • Traffic • Infrastructure • Rents • Workforce Composition • Timeliness of Approvals • Website/Access to Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Available Space • Land • Labor Cost • Industry Sensitivity • Sites Available • Predictable Permits • Fast Track Permits • Citizen Participation in the Review Process • Cultural and Recreational Amenities • Crime • Housing • Local Schools • Amenities • State Business Incentives • Local Business Incentives • Local Tax Rates • Tax Delinquency 	Less Important ○ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airports • Rail • Water Transportation • Proximity to Universities and Research • Unions • Workforce Training • Permitting Ombudsman
Important ◐ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Transit • Physical Attractiveness • Complementary / Supplemental Business Services • Critical Mass Firms • Cross Marketing • Marketing Follow-Up 		


Each question in EDSAT addresses a particular location factor and provides three ways to interpret that factor relative to the response in your own community:

1. The level of importance businesses and developers place on that location factor
2. How other jurisdictions participating in EDSAT have typically responded to that question
3. How your jurisdiction’s response compares to the typical response and the importance of the location factor

The EDSAT analysis compares your jurisdiction’s responses with those of Comparison Group Municipalities (CGM)—that is, all of the jurisdictions that have completed the EDSAT questionnaire. With regard to the Permitting Process, for example, your jurisdiction may offer significantly shorter review times than the CGM. In this case, the EDSAT analysis suggests that on this measure your jurisdiction may possess a relative advantage in what is a *Very Important* location factor. However, if permit reviews take significantly longer, then your jurisdiction may be at a disadvantage, because businesses are interested in “time-to-market”—the time it takes to get up and running in an ever-increasingly competitive environment.

EDSAT assigns a color code to highlight the results of your jurisdiction compared to the median response among the CGM. Colors—green, yellow, and red—indicate a municipality’s relative strength on each specific location factor. Green indicates that your jurisdiction is quantitatively or qualitatively stronger than the CGM response; yellow indicates that your jurisdiction is average or typical; and red indicates a relative deficiency.

SAMPLE RESULT, DRAWN FROM SECTION 1: ACCESS TO MARKETS/CUSTOMERS

<input type="radio"/> E. Airports			
Report of [REDACTED] as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
27: Do you have a local (municipal/ general aviation) airport?	yes		no

The interaction between the importance of a location factor and your jurisdiction’s relative strength yields powerful information. With respect to businesses and developers, a comparison yielding “red” for a *Very Important* factor represents the potential for a “deal-breaker,” while a comparison resulting in “green” for a *Very Important* factor represents the likelihood of a “deal-maker.” There are several important considerations to keep in mind when reviewing a jurisdiction’s EDSAT results:

1. If your jurisdiction is at a disadvantage in certain *Very Important* location factors, such as possessing a slow permitting process, a workforce that lacks necessary skills, and infrastructure that lacks the capacity to support growth, it is considered to have three distinct “deal-breakers,” regardless of its geographic location.
2. Your jurisdiction should look at its EDSAT results as an overview, and not focus on a particular location factor. One “deal-breaker” does not mean that your jurisdiction should abandon its economic development efforts. At the same time, your jurisdiction cannot rely solely on one or two “deal-makers.” Economic development is a dynamic process and should be managed in such a way that a community continually responds to the changing needs of local and prospective businesses.
3. The interpretation of comparisons and color assignments depends on your jurisdiction’s context in answering the question and its objectives for economic development. For example, if there are significantly more square feet of vacant commercial space than the CGM median, EDSAT assigns “red” because large amounts of space may indicate outdated facilities in a stagnant local economy. However, the empty space may actually be an asset if your jurisdiction is focusing on attracting businesses that would benefit from large spaces, such as a creative mixed-use complex. Thus, your jurisdiction’s context is important in understanding EDSAT results.

For some questions, the red and green color assignments serve to highlight the response for further consideration within the context of your jurisdiction’s objectives and circumstances. Several questions have no comparison at all. They tend to be lists of potential incentives, resources, or regulations associated with the municipality and will be discussed in corresponding sections of the report.

SUMMARY OF RELATIVE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

This section summarizes Grafton's primary strengths and weaknesses in the realm of economic development. EDSAT does not provide an overall grade for a jurisdiction, but rather assesses a jurisdiction's unique set of strengths, weaknesses, and economic development objectives.

The Dukakis Center staff create a list of significant or notable responses for each of the *Very Important*, *Important*, and *Less Important* location factors, emphasizing strengths and "deal-makers," which are not organized in any particular order of importance. Dukakis Center staff suggests that your municipality review these lists and use them to highlight, enhance, and market your town's strengths.

Tasks on the weakness and "deal-breaker" lists, however, are prioritized to emphasize the importance of their mitigation. The Dukakis Center staff arranges the tasks according to feasibility, with consideration of the latitude and abilities of local, county, or regional levels of government. For example, in a jurisdiction with limited highway access, building a new highway interchange or connector would likely be cost-prohibitive, time-consuming, and an inefficient use of local resources. However, other tasks are more feasible with modest investments in time and resources. For example, streamlining the permitting process and making related development information readily accessible to both location experts and businesses could be accomplished without significant capital investments. Although location experts rank both highway access and the timeliness of permitting as *Very Important* location factors, in the prioritized list of potential "deal-breakers," the permitting process is given a higher priority due to its feasibility in implementation.

Grafton's Strengths and Potential "Deal-Makers"

The following three lists of Grafton's strengths are its powerful economic development assets. The town should build upon these assets and promote them to prospective businesses and developers. Grafton should first consider those in the *Very Important* group, then the *Important*, and finally the *Less Important* group. Please note that strengths are **not listed in any particular order** within each list.

Strengths among *Very Important* Location Factors

INFRASTRUCTURE: Grafton's infrastructure is currently at sufficient capacity for growth and reliable service, which is ideal for a town hoping to engage in economic development. The kWh rates are below average for residential and commercial properties but slightly above average for industrial properties.

LABOR (AVAILABLE): Over 51% of Grafton's residents over 25 have earned at least a bachelor's degree helps reinforce the case that Grafton has a strong labor pool that puts them at a competitive advantage.

TRAFFIC: While many of the factors relating to traffic are in line with the CGM, the average speed of travel during rush hour is faster than other cities and towns. This is a strength, but anecdotes of a growing traffic concerns in North Grafton by Route 30 are important to monitor and manage to ensure that this continues to be a competitive advantage.

WEBSITE: Grafton's website is an excellent asset that is resourceful and kept up to date. Importantly, the main page features a specific portal on "Doing Business" that includes resources, opportunities and a permitting guide.

WORKFORCE COMPOSITION: Grafton features a strong workforce that has an exceptionally high composition of technically skilled, managerial, and professional workers. Employers and developers considering Grafton will have a strong pool of qualified individuals to fill any skilled positions.

Strengths among *Important* Location Factors

COMPLEMENTARY/SUPPLEMENTARY BUSINESS SERVICES: Grafton has two major competitive advantages when it comes to complementary and supplementary business services: regional chamber of commerce that is vigorously involved in the economic development activities of the town, and a biotech incubator at Tufts Veterinary School. Both of these factors outweigh the town's lack of specialized law firms.

CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES: Grafton appears to appreciate its rich history. Developers and workers alike enjoy having proximity to amenities such as golf courses or boating activities, but not every town has the capacity to leverage their history with local museums as an additional benefit.

CRIME RATE: The crime rate in Grafton is very low, particularly burglary rates, auto theft, and robbery rate. Grafton does not typically have any homicides, so it is fair to assume homicides rate to return to zero.

LAND: Grafton has ample land that is available for industrial large development. Grafton has also made a deliberate effort to put aside land in a business park that is being marketed toward businesses as well as life sciences and tech oriented developers.

PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS: Grafton's vigorous enforcement of codes and regulations on abandoned properties and trash disposal, and vigorous maintenance of public spaces has helped to strengthen the community's physical attractiveness. Grafton's low rates of commercial and industrial vacancies mean that the risk of blight is minimal. Being proactive about code violations by using "See Click Fix" further strengthens Grafton's physical attractiveness.

LABOR COST: Grafton's prevailing wages are lower for semi-skilled, blue-collar and mid-level clerical workers. This provides businesses with a valuable cost advantage.

FAST TRACK PERMITS: Fast track permitting helps to reduce "time to market" and Grafton does well in this regard. The town's biotech "platinum ready" status helps to solidify this advantage.

LOCAL SCHOOLS: Overall Grafton pupils' performance is better than the CGM when it comes to English and mathematics proficiency, even though Grafton spends less than its peers per student. Spending is often a proxy for priority, but it seems that having good schools and high achievement are priorities for Grafton.

LOCAL TAX RATES: While the tax rate on property is high, Grafton currently has no tax abatements. Industry is also taxed at the same rate as residential and commercial property. The unitary tax structure combined with a meals tax helps to ensure that Grafton is collecting revenue in a way that is beneficial for economic development.

Strengths among *Less Important* Location Factors

RAIL: The Grafton commuter rail stop has helped drive growth in Grafton in recent years and its competitive advantage is significant.

PROXIMITY TO UNIVERSITIES & RESEARCH: Grafton has great access to public and private four-year colleges and universities, vocational schools and is home to the Tufts Veterinary School.

UNIONS: Grafton lacks significant union presence.

PERMITTING OMBUDSMAN: Grafton's local license requirements go beyond the CGM average.

Grafton's Weaknesses and Potential "Deal-Breakers"

Despite many advantages, Grafton has a number of apparent weaknesses that can pose a challenge to successful development. The factors in the *Very Important* group are the ones that the town should consider addressing first because they are the most critical potential "deal-breakers." Again, the town should next consider those in the *Important* group, and finally those the *Less Important* group.

Unlike the above itemization of Grafton's strengths, this three-part list of weaknesses is **arranged in order of priority**. We suggest that, while reviewing this prioritized list of challenges, participants keep in mind Grafton's economic development objectives and the feasibility (economic and otherwise) of upgrading "deal-breakers" and other weaknesses.

Weaknesses among *Very Important* Location Factors

RENT: Grafton's rent prices are higher than then CGM in retail, general office, and manufacturing.

PARKING: Although street parking is free throughout Grafton, on-site parking for retail, manufacturing and general office space are all below the CGM. Grafton is taking advantage of state and federal infrastructure grants, which shows promise, but parking at available sites continues to be an issue. **HIGHWAY ACCESS:** Grafton has low availability for retail sites within two miles of a limited access highway. That being said, most of the sites are just beyond two miles. Weight restrictions on some roads could be problematic for some businesses as well.

Weaknesses among Important Location Factors

INDUSTRY SENSITIVITY: Although it is not a *relative* weakness, Grafton along with the majority of the CGM would be wise to demonstrate greater industry sensitivity within the areas.

PREDICTABLE PERMITS: Permitting processes that are predictable helps to facilitate economic development. Grafton currently does not provide a checklist of permitting requirements, a flowchart of the permitting process, a handbook or allow for a single presentation of a development proposal to all review boards, which makes this a weakness.

CRITICAL MASS FIRMS: Grafton has planned for the adoption of a development strategy coupled with an economic plan, but because this has yet to be realized it should be considered a weakness. Grafton is also lacking in an aggressive industrial attraction plan.

CROSS MARKETING: Grafton does not engage in cross marketing efforts of any kind: with already-resident firms, local or regional business organizations, or regional planning and development organizations, which compares poorly with the CGM.

MARKETING FOLLOW-UP: The lack of a formal marketing strategy makes marketing follow-up a weakness.

HOUSING: The vacancy rate for rental housing and homes are low enough that they could cause a large increase in housing cost. This risk in conjunction with the proportion of major officers living outside of the community makes housing a relative weakness for Grafton.

PUBLIC TRANSIT: Access to public transit is problematic for most of Grafton. While the town does have the RTA, the routes are limited and do not run on weekends.

SITES AVAILABLE: Grafton is proactive in maintaining an active relationship with real estate brokers and developers, but it does a poor job of publicizing available sites, reclaiming faltering properties, and protecting industrial land from incompatible uses.

STATE AND LOCAL BUSINESS INCENTIVES: Grafton rarely takes advantage of the state's tax incentive programs, and does not actively pursue federal/state programs designated to attract and retain businesses. Although your municipality offers TIF arrangements, it does not offer any additional programs attractive to business investment.

SITE AMENITIES: Grafton currently has little to no fine dining, retail shops, day care, and fast food restaurants near its available sites.

TAX DELINQUENCY: Grafton has a higher number of tax defaulted properties than the CGM and the properties are typically auctioned much later. State regulations may be the cause of some slow down and the town appears to have a good policy of only selling properties that will provide net revenue, but this should be an issue to watch.

Weaknesses among Less Important Location Factors

WORKFORCE TRAINING: Grafton is not meeting demand for adult education programs that can help to develop the workforce and enhance opportunities.

AIRPORTS: Grafton is relatively close to a regional airport in Worcester but is over 31 miles from Logan International Airport and the time it takes to get to the airport can vary significantly depending on the time of day.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The following is a ten-part section-by-section analysis of the EDSAT results comparing Grafton's self-reported responses with the median response among the CGM. Each location factor is ranked with three possible symbols: The shaded circle (●) denotes a *Very Important* factor, the half-shaded circle (◐) denotes an *Important* factor, and the unshaded circle (○) denotes a *Less Important* factor.

This ten-part portion of the report—its heart, really—is presented in the same order as the questions listed on the EDSAT questionnaire, with the tabular printout of Grafton's results appearing first, and our narrative summary and interpretation of the results appearing second. The tabular results are displayed in four primary groupings of information:

Group 1 identifies a location factor (such as Highway Access), a circle indicating the relative importance of the location factor, and questions related to the factor that your town has already answered.

Group 2 shows Grafton's responses to the EDSAT questions.

Group 3 is the median (or majority, for yes/no questions) response among the "comparison group municipalities" (or CGM) that have completed the EDSAT questionnaire.

Group 4 is a series of green, yellow, or red blocks indicating how Grafton compares to the CGM. A built-in function in EDSAT allows a municipality to compare itself against a subset of the CGM by other criteria such as population, median income, or size of operating budget. For purposes of this analysis, however, Grafton is compared with all the CGM.

Section 1: Access to Customers/Markets

● A. Highway Access			
Report of Ludlow as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question			Comparison Group
1: What percentage of available sites for retail trade, including your central business district, are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	75%+	75%+	75%+
2: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	75%+	75%+	75%+
3: What percentage of available sites for general office space are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	75%+	75%+	75%+
4: Does your jurisdiction impose weight restrictions on streets or access roads?	yes	yes	yes

Importance To Market			Your Performance Relative To Peers		
● Very Important	◐ Important	○ Less Important	Strong	Average	Weak

Group 1 points to the importance circle in the first row of the table.





Group 2 points to the 'yes' response in the fourth row of the table.

Group 3 points to the 'yes' response in the fourth row of the table.


Group 4 points to the yellow block in the third row of the table.


Section 1: Access to Customers/Markets


In order to minimize transportation costs and time-to-market, businesses want adequate access to uncongested transportation corridors for their shipping needs, customers, and employees. Highway access, congestion, and parking are *Very Important* factors in location decisions. Public transportation is *Important*, while proximity to airports, rail, and water transport are *Less Important*. The overall physical attractiveness of public spaces, enforcement of codes, and condition of housing and commercial real estate are *Important*, as they are indications of general economic health and quality of life in a community.

 A. Highway Access			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: What percentage of available sites for retail trade, including your central business district, are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	1-25%		75% or greater
2: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	1-25%		75% or greater
3: What percentage of available sites for general office space are within 2 miles of an entrance or exit to a limited-access major highway?	1-25%		75% or greater
4: Does your jurisdiction impose weight restrictions on streets or access roads?	yes		no

Importance To Market


 Very Important


 Important


 Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong

 Average

 Weak

 No Comparison



B. Public Transit

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
5: What percentage of available sites for retail trade are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	1-25%		50-74%
6: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	1-25%		26-49%
7: What percentage of available sites for general office space are within 1/4 mile of public bus or rail rapid transit?	1-25%		50-74%
8: Is there a transit-oriented development strategy in your plans for attracting new firms?	no		no
9: Is there a commuter rail or bus stop within 5 miles of your jurisdiction's boundaries?	yes		yes
10: Do you offer any shuttle services to other public commuting stations?	yes		no
11: Is public transit service available on nights and weekends?	no		yes

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers



Strong



Weak

Average

No Comparison



C. Parking

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
12: What percentage of available sites for retail trade have on-site parking?	50-74%		75% or greater
13: What percentage of available sites for manufacturing have on-site parking?	50-74%		75% or greater
14: What percentage of available sites for general office space have on-site parking?	50-74%		75% or greater
15: Does your jurisdiction offer parking facilities near development sites?	no		no
16: Have you used state or federal infrastructure grants to improve parking in your jurisdiction?	yes		no
17: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$/Hourly	0		between \$0 and 0
18: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$/Daily	0		0
19: How much is typically charged for parking in your central business district? \$/Monthly	0		0

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong








Average

Weak

No Comparison

☒ D. Traffic

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
20: Do you have regular access to a traffic engineer or transportation planner, such as one who is on staff or with a regional organization of which your jurisdiction is a member?	yes		yes
21: Do you routinely use the services of a transportation consultant?	yes		yes
22: Do you have access to traffic count data for the major roadways in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
23: Do you require firms or developers to provide traffic mitigation beyond the streets adjacent to the site? (e.g. installing traffic signals, metering flow)	yes		yes
24: How would you rate traffic into and out of your jurisdiction during a typical weekday rush hour?	Moderately congested		Moderately congested
25: What is the average speed of automobile commuter traffic during a typical weekday rush hour?	26 - 35 mph		11 - 25 mph
26: Do you require a traffic impact analysis for large-scale development or redevelopment projects?	yes		yes

Importance To Market


☒ Very Important ☐ Important ☐ Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong  Average
 Weak  No Comparison

☐ E. Airports

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
27: Do you have a local (municipal/ general aviation) airport?	no		no
28: The closest regional airport is how many miles away?	11-20 miles		11-20 miles
29: The closest major/international airport is how many miles away?	31 miles or more		20-30 miles
30: Is the major/international airport accessible by public transportation?	yes		yes
31: How long does it take to drive to the major/international airport from your town center?	21 minutes to 60 minutes		21 minutes to 60 minutes

Importance To Market

☒ Very Important ☐ Important ☐ Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong  Average
 Weak  No Comparison



F. Rail

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
32: Do you have rail freight service available?	yes		yes
33: Do you have intercity passenger rail service? Check all that apply.			
- Commuter	yes		no
- Intercity/Interstate(Amtrak)	no		no
- None	no		no

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers



Strong



Weak

Average

No Comparison



G. Physical Attractiveness

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
34: To what extent do you enforce codes and regulations on abandoned properties, abandoned vehicles, trash disposal within your jurisdiction?	Vigorously		Moderately
35: To what extent does your jurisdiction maintain streets, sidewalks, parks, etc., near available development sites?	Moderately		Moderately
36: Is there a hotline available for reporting code violations and maintenance needs within your jurisdiction?	yes		no
37: Is there a system for monitoring the timeliness and quality of responses to reported violations within your jurisdiction?	yes		no
38: Do you involve the arts community in the design of open space (street furniture, murals, etc.)?	no		no
39: What percentage of the acreage within your jurisdiction is reserved for parks?	0-5%		6-10%
40: What percentage of your housing stock is considered dilapidated?	0-5%		0-5%
41: What percentage of your commercial buildings are boarded up or closed down and would need renovations to reopen?	0-5%		0-5%
42: What percentage of commercial space is presently vacant (not currently occupied)?	0-5%		6-10%
43: What percentage of your industrial buildings are boarded up or closed down and would need renovations to reopen?	0-5%		0-5%
44: What percentage of industrial space is presently vacant (not currently occupied)?	0-5%		6-10%

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Average

Weak

No Comparison



H. Water Transportation

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
45: Do you have water based transportation facilities within your jurisdiction? Check all that apply.	None		None

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong









Average

Weak


No Comparison


Section 2: Concentration of Businesses (Agglomeration)


Agglomeration refers to the number of complementary and supplemental services and related firms—including academic institutions—that are available within a jurisdiction to support new or existing companies. A concentration of similar or supporting companies creates a critical mass of businesses within an industry, making it easier for that industry to thrive in the local community, regionally, or on the state level. The scale of agglomeration within a jurisdiction can be enhanced by the intensity of its efforts to attract companies, its coordination of marketing plans with regional or state efforts, cross marketing among stakeholder organizations, and follow-up with existing and potential businesses.

 A. Complementary/Supplemental Business Services			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: Is your local chamber of commerce or business association actively involved in the economic development activities of your jurisdiction?	Vigorously		Moderately
2: Does your jurisdiction have an active volunteer economic development committee or nonprofit center for economic development?	yes		yes
3: Is there an incubator or other form of cooperative space for start-up businesses in your jurisdiction?	yes		no
4: Are there CPA, business advisory or financial services firms in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
5: Are there law firms in your jurisdiction specializing in commercial law, intellectual property rights, or patents?	no		yes
6: Are there branches of major commercial banks in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
7: To what extent are the business services (e.g. venture capital, business planning, specialized recruiting, etc.) in your jurisdiction capable of working with emerging technical and scientific firms?	Moderately capable		Moderately capable


Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers


Strong


Average


Weak















No Comparison















B. Critical Mass Firms

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
8: Does your jurisdiction have an up-to-date development strategy, an overall economic development plan (OEDP), or an economic development plan within your community master plan?	no		yes
9: Is your jurisdiction part of a county or regional OEDP or Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?	no		yes
10: Does your state have a development strategy or economic development plan?	yes		yes
11: If yes, are there firms within specific industry types or sectors that are targeted in your jurisdiction's, your county's or your state's development strategy?	yes		yes
12: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your municipality's development strategy? Other, please specify (Your Municipality)	Other Life Sciences, including Biotech; Traditional Manufacturing		
13: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your region/county's development strategy? Other, please specify (Regional/County)	Alternative Energy; Travel and Tourism; Information Technology; Financial Services; Traditional Manufacturing; Other Life Sciences, including Biotech; Healthcare		

14: If yes, what specific industry types or sectors are targeted by your state's development strategy? (State)	Alternative Energy; Travel and Tourism; Information Technology; Financial Services; Traditional Manufacturing; Other Life Sciences, including Biotech; Healthcare		
15: Which of the following jurisdictions have development specialists to assist in interpreting the needs of these clusters? (Choose all that apply)			
- Your Municipality	no		yes
- Regional/County	yes		no
- State	yes		no
16: How aggressive is your industrial attraction policy?	Don't have one		Moderate
<div> <div> Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important </div> <div> Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison </div> </div>			

 C. Cross Marketing			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
<i>Question</i>	<i>Grafton</i>		<i>Comparison Group</i>
17: Do you actively enlist the services of firms already resident in your jurisdiction to assist in attracting new firms?	no		no
18: Do you engage local and regional business organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	no		yes
19: Do you engage regional planning and development organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
20: Do you engage state agencies and organizations to participate in marketing your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
<div> <div> Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important </div> <div> Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison </div> </div>			



D. Marketing Follow-Up

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
21: Is there a formal de-briefing process with firms that chose to locate in your jurisdiction about what made the difference?	no		no
22: Is there a formal de-briefing process with firms that chose not to locate in your jurisdiction about what made the difference?	no		no
23: Do you have a formal procedure for contacting existing local firms about their satisfaction with your jurisdiction?	no		no
24: Do you have a formal procedure for intervening when early news surfaces about firm dissatisfaction with your jurisdiction?	no		no

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Weak

Average

No Comparison



E. Proximity to Universities & Research

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
25: How many public or private four-year college or universities are located within your jurisdiction?	1		0
26: How many public or private four-year college or universities are located within 10 miles of your jurisdiction?	8		2
27: How many community colleges are located within your jurisdiction?	0		0
28: How many vocational/technical schools are located within your jurisdiction?	2		1

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong










Weak

























Average





No Comparison

Section 3: Cost of Land (Implicit/Explicit)

The cost of land to a firm includes two *Very Important* factors: Infrastructure and Rent. Updating civil, utility, and telecommunications infrastructure is costly, and firms do not like to incur these expenses. Therefore, if a municipality does not already have adequate capacity in place, a potential firm could decide to locate somewhere else with stronger capacity. Likewise, Rents are *Very Important* as they contribute heavily to operating expenses. Location experts consider the quality of available space and amount of available land for development *Important* factors.





<div>  A. Infrastructure </div>			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: Are there significant limitations to any of your existing infrastructure systems? - Water Supply	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
2: Public Sewer	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
3: Wastewater Treatment	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
4: Natural Gas	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
5: Electric Power	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
6: Data/Telecommunications - Land Lines	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
7: Data/Telecommunications - Cellular	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service
8: Data/Telecommunications - Fiber optic / Cable / DSL	Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service		Sufficient capacity for growth & reliable service

9: What is the average retail cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Residential	16.084		16.23				
10: What is the average retail cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Commercial	15.084		15.20				
11: What is the average retail cost in cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential, commercial, and industrial end users in your municipality? Industrial	13.55		13.03				
<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2"> Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important </td><td colspan="2"> Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison </td></tr> </table>				Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important		Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison	
Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important		Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison					

<div>  B. Rents </div>			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
12: What is the current average square foot cost for existing retail space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?	16		12
13: What is the current average square foot cost for existing retail space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?	15		13
14: What is the current average square foot cost for existing manufacturing space (Triple Net/Lease)?	7		6
15: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS A	NA		16
16: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS B	15		12
17: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your central business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS C	12		9
18: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS A	NA		between 15.50 and 16
19: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS B	13		12.00
20: What is the current average square foot cost for existing general office space in your highway business district (Triple Net/Lease)?: CLASS C	10		9
21: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS A	0		between 12 and 15
22: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS B	40		40
23: Of all the available office space in your jurisdiction, what percentage is: CLASS C	60		40
<div> <div> Importance To Market <div>  Very Important  Important  Less Important </div> </div> <div> Your Performance Relative To Peers <div>  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison </div> </div> </div>			

C. Quality of Available Space

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
24: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered contaminated or brownfield sites?	0-10%		0-10%
25: What experience does your jurisdiction have with the redevelopment of contaminated or brownfield sites?	Limited		Limited
26: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered vacant or severely underutilized shopping centers?	11-20%		11-20%
27: Approximately what percentage of available sites in your jurisdiction would be considered unused open land or greenfield sites?	11-20%		21-35%

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important




Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong





 Weak

 Average

 No Comparison

D. Land (space)

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
28: Approximately how much vacant developable land in your jurisdiction is currently zoned for commercial/industrial uses?	301-450 acres		1-150 acres
29: Approximately how much vacant useable industrial or warehouse space exists in commercial/industrial buildings in your jurisdiction?	1-250,000 sq. feet		1-250,000 sq. feet
30: Approximately how much vacant useable office space exists in commercial/industrial buildings in your jurisdiction?	1-250,000 sq. feet		1-250,000 sq. feet
31: What proportion of the parcels available for industrial development or large scale commercial development are of 5 acres or more?	51% or greater		11-20%

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important




Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong






 Weak

 Average


 No Comparison


Section 4: Labor


The effect of labor factors on location decisions runs somewhat contrary to popular belief. An available labor force that is adequately trained (Workforce Composition) is a Very Important factor, while the cost of labor is Important and the presence of strong unions is Less Important. Conventional wisdom often holds that higher labor costs and strong unions negatively affect a firm's location decision. However, if the workforce is adequately skilled, these factors are not as detrimental as the conventional rule of thumb suggests. Workforce training resources is Less Important relative to other location factors. However, having a technically trained workforce whose skills align with the industries a municipality wants to attract is a valuable selling point.

 A. Labor Cost			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: What is the prevailing average hourly wage rate for semi-skilled, blue-collar manufacturing workers?	\$7.25-\$12.25		\$12.26-\$17.25
2: What is the prevailing average hourly wage rate for mid-level clerical workers?	\$7.25-\$12.25		\$12.26-\$17.25
3: What is the prevailing average annual salary for public high school teachers?	\$60,001-\$70,000		\$60,001-\$70,000
4: Is there a local minimum or living wage statute?	no		no


Importance To Market


 Very Important


 Important


 Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong







 Average

 Weak

 No Comparison

B. Workforce Composition

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
5: What percentage of your workforce is Unskilled?	1-25%		1-25%
6: What percentage of your workforce is Semi-skilled	26-49%		26-49%
7: What percentage of your workforce is Technically skilled	50% or greater		26-49%
8: What percentage of your workforce is Managerial	26-49%		1-25%
9: What percentage of your workforce is Professional	26-49%		1-25%
10: What percentage of your workforce are current English language learners?	0-10%		0-10%

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important




Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong




 Weak

 Average

 No Comparison

C. Unions

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
11: Have any employers in your jurisdiction had a major strike or work stoppage within the last three years?	no		no
12: Has there been a major union organizing drive among public or private workers in the last three years?	no		no
13: Do labor unions have a significant presence in the labor market of your jurisdiction?	Not at all		Somewhat

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important




Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong

 Weak

 Average

 No Comparison



D. Labor (available)

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
14: What percentage of residents age 25 or older have earned at least a high school diploma?	85% or greater		85% or greater
15: What percentage of residents age 25 or older have earned at least a bachelor's degree?	51% or greater		21-35%

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Weak

Average

No Comparison



E. Workforce Training

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
16: Which of the following workforce training resources do you interact with to respond to skill development needs of firms?			
- Regional employment board or state employment services department	yes		
- Area High schools	yes		
- Voc-tech schools or community colleges	yes		
- Human service or nonprofit career training centers	yes		
17: Do you support public-private partnerships to provide specific workforce training?	yes		yes
18: Is there an adult education program readily available to residents of your jurisdiction?	yes, but insufficient capacity to serve existing need		yes

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong







Weak




Average





No Comparison

Section 5: Municipal Process

The municipal process section covers several themes relating to marketing and permitting. Public officials who aggressively market their jurisdictions strengths and collaborate with firms already located in their town or city may have significant advantages in attracting new investment. Local firms can speak firsthand about their own experiences and market conditions to interested companies and investors. Likewise, they can advise municipal leaders about industries with which they are intimately familiar. Additionally, municipalities that have established transparent and efficient permitting processes, minimizing startup time and costs, are also ahead of the game. Among the factors examined in this section, the timeliness of approvals is *Very Important* to location experts and all but one of the remaining factors (Permitting Ombudsman) are ranked *Important*.

 A. Industry Sensitivity			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: Does your jurisdiction have a marketing program based on the needs identified by industrial or office location specialists?	no		no
2: Does your jurisdiction have a marketing program based on existing core strengths, identified opportunities, or industry concentrations?	no		no
3: Do you have a quick response team available when negative data, stories, or incidents about your jurisdiction make the news?	no		no
4: Do you actively engage local business spokespersons to speak on behalf of your jurisdiction?	yes		no
5: Do you have a strategy for engaging your jurisdiction's racial or ethnic populations in unique businesses, festivals, etc., as a way to attract regional niche shopping?	no		no

Importance To Market
 Very Important
  Important
  Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers
 Strong
  Average
 Weak
  No Comparison



B. Sites Available

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
6: Does your jurisdiction own sites that it is currently marketing for development?	no		no
7: Is there a readily accessible, up-to-date, complete list of sites that are available for development in your jurisdiction?	no		no
8: Do you maintain an active relationship with commercial real estate brokers, developers, or agents with sites in your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
9: Do your land use regulations protect land currently zoned industrial from encroachment by residential or other incompatible uses?	no		yes
10: Do you have an active strategy for reclaiming or land banking tax delinquent and tax title properties?	no		no
11: Do you have an active strategy for reclaiming vacant or underutilized shopping plazas?	no		no

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers



Strong



Weak

Average

No Comparison



C. Timeliness of Approvals

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
12: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Site plan review	9-12 weeks		5-8 weeks
13: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Zoning variance	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
14: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Special permit	9-12 weeks		9-12 weeks
15: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Building permit	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks
16: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for new projects?: Appeals process	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
17: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Site plan review	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
18: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Zoning variance	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks
19: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Special permit	5-8 weeks		between 5-8 weeks and 9-12 weeks
20: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Building permit	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks
21: What is the average time (in weeks) from application to completion of the review process for existing structures?: Appeals process	5-8 weeks		5-8 weeks

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Weak

Average

No Comparison



D. Predicable Permits

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
22: Do you provide a checklist of permitting requirements to prospective developers?	no		yes
23: Do you provide a flowchart of the permitting process to prospective developers?	no		no
24: Do you provide a development handbook to prospective developers?	no		no
25: Do you allow for a single presentation of a development proposal to all review boards and commissions with relevant permit authority?	no		no

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Average

Weak

No Comparison



E. Fast Track Permits

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
26: Do you pre-permit development in certain districts?	yes		no
27: Are there any publicly or cooperatively owned industrial parks in your jurisdiction that have their own expedited permitting authority?	yes		no
28: Do you have an "overlay" district that allows expedited permitting of certain uses?	yes		no
29: Do you market "fast track" permitting to potential developers or firms?	yes		no

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Average

Weak

No Comparison



F. Citizen Participation in the Review Process

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
30: To what extent do abutters slow the permitting process in your jurisdiction?	Somewhat		Somewhat
31: To what extent do organized neighborhood groups slow the permitting?	Somewhat		Somewhat
32: To what extent do elected officials in your jurisdiction expedite development by facilitating dialogue with community groups?	Very little		Very little
33: Do you establish a specific time frame and procedure for abutter or neighborhood response in the initial stage of the process?	no		yes
34: Do interested parties get multiple opportunities for review and comment during the various development review processes?	yes		yes
35: Has a development proposal in your jurisdiction been stopped by abutter or neighborhood opposition in the past 5 years?	no		yes
36: Have officials from your jurisdiction intervened to rescue a development proposal that was endangered by abutter or neighborhood opposition in the last 5 years?	no		no

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong

Weak

Average

No Comparison



G. Permitting Ombudsman

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
37: Does the chief executive officer of your jurisdiction play a significant role in ensuring the efficiency of your local permitting process?	yes		yes
38: Are there other local officials empowered to ensure the efficiency of your local permitting process?	yes		yes
39: Is there a "development cabinet" or "development team" that is convened to review major developments?	yes		yes
40: Do you have an established training program for development staff that regularly identifies critical adjustments in policy or regulation to accommodate changing needs of firms?	no		no
41: Do you have an established training program for boards, commissions, authorities, districts, and elected officials that regularly identifies critical adjustments in policy or regulation to accommodate changing needs of firms?	no		no
42: Is your jurisdiction involved in the process for businesses that require state or federal permitting or licensing?	no		yes
43: Do you provide technical assistance for businesses in the state or federal permit or license application process?	no		no

44: Does your jurisdiction require any local licenses for specific businesses or industries?			
- General license for all businesses	yes		no
- Auto dealership	yes		no
- Barber shop	yes		no
- Bar/Tavern	yes		no
- Beauty salon	yes		no
- Child care services	no		no
- Construction contractor	yes		no
- Home health care	no		no
- Massage therapist	yes		no
- Real estate agent/broker	no		no
- Restaurant	yes		no
- Skilled Trades (electrician, plumber, etc)	no		no
- Other, please specify	no		no
45: Approximately how long (in weeks) is your local licensing process for businesses?	0-4 weeks		0-4 weeks

Importance To Market

Very Important

Important

Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

Strong









Average




Weak





No Comparison






Section 6: Quality of Life (Community)




The quality of life within the community is an *Important* location factor because companies want to be able to offer employees a safe community with affordable housing, good schools, and a rich selection of cultural and recreational opportunities.





 A. Cultural and Recreational Amenities			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: Is there a professional sports team resident within your jurisdiction?	no		no
2: Is there a major art, science or historical museum?	yes		no
3: Is there a professional repertory theater company?	no		no
4: Is there a civic center, arena or major concert hall?	yes		no
5: Is there a golf course within your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
6: Is there a symphony orchestra, opera, or ballet company?	no		no
7: Are there public beaches or boating activities within 5 miles of your jurisdiction?	yes		yes

Importance To Market
 Very Important
  Important
  Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers
 Strong
  Average
 Weak
  No Comparison







 B. Crime			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
8: What was the residential burglary rate per 100,000 residents last year in your jurisdiction?	185		265
9: What was the auto theft rate per 100,000 residents last year?	27		83
10: What was the robbery rate per 100,000 residents last year?	16		between 30 and 31
11: What was the homicide rate per 100,000 residents last year?	1		1

Importance To Market
 Very Important
  Important
  Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers
 Strong
  Average
 Weak
  No Comparison

C. Housing

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
12: What was the median sale price of a single-family home in your jurisdiction last year?	\$251,000-\$350,000		\$251,000-\$350,000
13: What was the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in your jurisdiction last year?	\$1001-\$1250		\$1001-\$1250
14: What is the homeownership rate?	66-75%		66-75%
15: What is the vacancy rate for rental housing?	Less than 3%		3-5%
16: What percent of homes are for sale?	Less than 3%		Less than 3%
17: Approximately what proportion of the major officers of firms located in your jurisdiction live in the community?	Few		Some

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important




Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong











 Weak

































 Average

 No Comparison

D. Local Schools

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
18: What is the average K-12 per pupil expenditure in your jurisdiction last year?	\$10,001 - \$12,000		\$12,001 - \$14,000
19: Does your state mandate an assessment or proficiency test as a prerequisite for high school graduation?	yes		yes
20: If yes, what percent of students in your jurisdiction tested at least "proficient" in English?	81% or greater		66-80%
21: If yes, what percent of students in your jurisdiction tested at least "proficient" in Mathematics?	81% or greater		66-80%
22: If yes, are the tests used as a measure of performance within your local school district for teacher assessments or teacher evaluations?	no		no
23: What percentage of your jurisdiction's K-12 students are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch last year?	1-25%		1-25%
24: What was the average combined (reading, math, and writing) SAT score last year?	1126 or higher		
25: What was the average composite score (English, math, reading, and science) for the ACT last year?	25.1		

26: What percentage of high school freshmen normally graduate within 5 years?	81%-94%		81%-94%		
27: What is the high school dropout rate last year?	1-25%		1-25%		
28: Are there any schools in your jurisdiction that are currently deemed "underperforming?"	no		no		
29: What percentage of high school graduates from last year's class went on to a four-year college?	50-74%		50-74%		
30: Are there any charter schools in your jurisdiction?	no		no		
31: What types of private schools are there in your jurisdiction?					
- Parochial	no				
- Non-sectarian	no				
- Boarding	no				
<table border="1"> <tr> <td> Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important </td> <td> Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison </td> </tr> </table>				Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison				


Section 7: Quality of Life (Site)

This section reviews the amenities and services available within one mile of existing development sites. Having a variety of amenities, restaurants, stores, and services near employment centers enhances the location, adds convenience, and allows employees more social opportunities.

 A. Amenities			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Fast food restaurant	Few		Most
2: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Fine dining	None		Some
3: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Day care	Few		Most
4: What proportion of existing development sites within your jurisdiction have the following within 1 mile?: Retail shops	Some		Most

Importance To Market

 Very Important

 Important

 Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers

 Strong












 Average

 Weak


 No Comparison

Section 8: Business Incentives


When companies are evaluating various jurisdictions for site location, business incentives (mainly subsidies and tax credits) are *Important* considerations. However, contrary to conventional wisdom, these incentives are not the first factors on which an investor makes a location decision—nor are they decisive. Factors such as infrastructure, workforce composition, and timeliness of permitting are of the utmost importance and can all too easily become “deal-breakers.” A municipality must be at least adequate in these areas before a company will advance negotiations. While investors value a broad portfolio of business incentives as possible “deal-closers,” they might not initially attract them.

 A. State			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: Are businesses in your jurisdiction eligible for any of the following special state tax incentives? Check all that apply.			
- Investment tax credits	yes		no
- Job training tax credits	yes		no
- Research and development (R&D) tax credits	yes		no
- Low (subsidized) interest loans	yes		no
- Loan guarantees	yes		no
- Equity financing	yes		no
- Workforce training grants	yes		no
- Other, please specify	no		no
2: To what extent does your jurisdiction actively take advantage of any special state business incentives?	Very little		Somewhat
3: Does your state allow for priority funding for distressed economic areas?	yes		yes


Importance To Market



Very Important




Important




Less Important


Your Performance Relative To Peers




Strong



Average



Weak



No Comparison








Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
4: Does your jurisdiction offer existing businesses property tax abatement?	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
5: If yes, what proportion of existing businesses are offered abatements?		<input type="checkbox"/>	
6: Does your jurisdiction offer new businesses property tax abatement?	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
7: If yes, what proportion of new businesses are offered abatements?		<input type="checkbox"/>	
8: Who negotiates the tax abatement?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	board of selectmen

9: Does your jurisdiction offer any of the following incentives for businesses to locate in your jurisdiction? (Check all that apply)


























- Revolving loan fund	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Loan guarantees	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Revenue bonds	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Equity participation	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Business district group loans	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- None	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Investment tax credits	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Job training tax credits	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Research and development (R&D) tax credits	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Low (subsidized) interest loans	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Workforce training grants	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Other, please specify	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no

10: Does your jurisdiction actively pursue federal and/or state programs designed to assist in attracting and retaining businesses?	yes		yes
11: Does your jurisdiction use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or other programs to provide tax breaks to businesses?	yes		yes
12: Does your jurisdiction grant TIFs or similar programs for retail development?	yes		no
13: Does your jurisdiction assist in securing financing for businesses with commercial lenders or state industrial finance mechanisms?	yes		no
14: Do you actively try to attract local, state, and federal facilities to your jurisdiction?	no		no
15: Is any part of your jurisdiction in a designated Enterprise Zone?	no		no
16: Do you participate in a regional brownfield revolving loan fund or offer your own?	Regional		Regional

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important			Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison	
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Section 9: Tax Rates

Municipalities often think that if tax rates are too high, they will have a hard time attracting businesses—that high taxes are a “deal-breaker.” Like financial incentives, however, the tax rate is not one of the *Very Important* location factors. If the *Very Important* factors are satisfied, then a business will likely request a more favorable tax rate during later-stage negotiations. Yet negotiations are unlikely to get to that point if the *More Important* location factors have not been satisfied.

 A. Local			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: What types of taxes are collected by your jurisdiction to pay for local services?			
- Property tax	yes		yes
- Local sales tax	no		no
- Local income tax	no		no
- Hotel room tax	no		no
- Meals tax	yes		no
2: Of the potential commercial and industrial property tax revenue your jurisdiction could collect, what percent is currently abated?	0%		1%-10%
3: Does your jurisdiction tax property in industrial or commercial uses at a different rate than residential properties?	no		yes
4: If yes, what is the tax rate on industrial/commercial property? \$ /\$1,000			
5: If yes, what is the tax rate on residential property? \$ /\$1,000			
6: If no, what is the tax rate on all property?	16.75/1000		13.97
7: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Industrial %			
	5		
8: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Commercial %			
	5		
9: What % of your tax revenue is derived from: Residential %			
	90		
10: Does your jurisdiction impose impact fees on new commercial or industrial development?			
	no		no
<div> <div> Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important </div> <div> Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison </div> </div>			



B. Tax Delinquency

Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions

Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
11: What proportion of residential property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
12: What proportion of commercial property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
13: What proportion of industrial property in your jurisdiction is more than one year delinquent in taxes?	0%-3%		0%-3%
14: How many properties are tax defaulted or subject to the power of sale?	50-100		0-50
15: When do you choose to auction tax title properties?	5-10 years		1-5 years
16: Do you have an organized and defined process for conducting such auctions and ensuring that they are successful?	yes		yes
17: Do you auction the "right to foreclose" on tax delinquent properties?	no		no
18: Do you seek tax abatement on tax title properties to allow the liens to clear for new owners?	no		no
19: If a tax delinquent or tax title property serves as an impediment to development, does the property receive special attention?	no		no

Importance To Market



Very Important



Important



Less Important

Your Performance Relative To Peers



Strong



Average














Weak

No Comparison









Section 10: Access to Information








A town's website could offer a business location expert his or her first impression of what the area has to offer. In today's digital age, a location expert could use a municipality's website to gather initial information, and if it is not available, easy to find, and easy to understand, the researcher may reject the town as a potential location without further consideration. While a town's website may rank *Less Important* as a factor in decision making, it can be this initial source of information that entices a location expert to probe deeper and to contact a municipality to seek additional information. At that point, the municipality's economic development leader or permitting ombudsman has an opportunity to step in and develop one-on-one rapport with the developer or company representative.

<div>  A. Website </div>			
Report of Grafton as compared to all jurisdictions			
Question	Grafton		Comparison Group
1: Does your jurisdiction's website list all local development policies and procedures?	yes		no
2: Does your website have contact information for key officials?	yes		yes
3: Does your website have general information about your jurisdiction?	yes		yes
4: How frequently is your website updated?	Weekly		Weekly
5: Does your website include an explicitly designed economic development tool aimed at businesses and developers?	yes		no
6: Is there a development permit checklist or flow chart on the website?	no		no
7: Are permit applications available for downloading on the website?	yes		yes
8: Are applications and other forms date certified to ensure that they are the most recent versions (i.e. the same versions that you would get in person)?	no		no
9: Is it possible to file permit applications electronically?	no		no
10: Is there a list of available land and building sites on the website?	yes		no

11: If yes, check the types of information available about each site. (Check all that apply)			
- :Owner	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Square footage of vacant land	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Square footage and quality of existing buildings and structures	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Abutters	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Zoning	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Assessed value	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Tax rate	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Current tax status (e.g. paid up, delinquent)	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Contamination	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Aerial photos	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- GIS links	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Other, please specify	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
12: Is there a posting of current hearings available on the website?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
13: Is there a posting of pending applications available on the website?	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
14: Is there a listing of current members of development review boards and staff contact information?	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	yes

15: Are there links to other local development resources? (Check all that apply)			
- State finance agencies	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- State permitting agencies	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Regional planning agencies	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Regional development organizations	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Workforce training organizations	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Local public or quasi-public financing resources	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Demographic information	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
- Economic development agencies	yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no
- Other, please specify	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	no

16: Are there links to other locally-based private or non-profit organizations?			
- Colleges and universities	yes		no
- Chambers of Commerce	yes		no
- Community development corporations	no		no
- Arts and cultural organizations	yes		no
- Sports and recreation venues	yes		no
- Convention and tourist organization	no		no
- Other, please specify	no		no
17: Is there a designated webmaster or staff person responsible for maintaining the website?	yes		yes

Importance To Market  Very Important  Important  Less Important	Your Performance Relative To Peers  Strong  Average  Weak  No Comparison
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NEXT STEPS

Grafton is a vibrant, growing Central Massachusetts community of nearly 18,000, with a strong base in manufacturing and the potential to expand across a variety of sectors, particularly into biotech. Just off the Mass Pike in Worcester County, the town is adjacent to Worcester, and has easy highway access to Boston, Hartford, Providence, and the rest of the region. The Grafton community has a well-balanced and skilled workforce, public schools with high performance per dollar spent, and a strong sense of history.

Grafton is poised for continued growth with a considerable amount of available land (some in large parcels) and a commuter rail stop, making the town commuter friendly for those who work in the Boston and Worcester metro areas, and putting it in a position to pursue a transit-oriented development strategy. Grafton is traditionally split between North and South, with several centers of commercial activity rather than a single central business district. It is home to the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, the Washington Mills and Wyman-Gordon manufacturing firms, and a wide variety of supplier, retail, educational, and other service employers who help support the community. Looking toward the future, the town has been wise to open the Grafton Science Park, an 84-acre commercial life sciences and technology park adjacent to the Cummings School that offers pre-permitting and has room to grow. Relatedly, the town is has been certified by the state as “bio-ready” at the platinum level for biotech development.

The Dukakis Center’s Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) creates a snapshot of Grafton’s economic growth efforts at a critical moment in the town’s development history. The following is an overview of where your town is getting it right, and where improvements can be made. Outlined below are the top recommendations and their respective levels of priority for your economic development efforts.

CORE STRENGTHS

Grafton enjoys valuable assets that can compel firms and developers to locate – or remain – in the town. Chief among them is the town’s strong available **labor** pool and **workforce composition**. In the 21st century, most firms are finding that the most important factor in choosing a location is how easily it can fill the skilled positions necessary for operation. With its comparatively high composition of residents with a bachelor’s degree and a workforce well-balanced among those with technical managerial, and professional skills, Grafton can make a compelling case for firms that gravitate toward the information, research, and professional services fields, along with those in the manufacturing sector.

Solid **traffic** and **infrastructure** management are also very important location factors for site location specialists, and Grafton excels at both. A strong infrastructure base—whether it’s new or repurposed on an existing footprint—is essential to development, and all of Grafton’s key infrastructure has sufficient capacity for growth and reliable service. Grafton also handles traffic fairly well—especially in view of its steep population growth—with relatively fast traffic speeds during rush hour. Attentiveness to traffic flow is also evidenced by the town’s employment of a traffic engineer on staff and regular use of a traffic consultant. However, the town should be proactive about bottlenecking at one particular juncture in North Grafton, for with its upward population curve it will only get worse.

The Grafton community has a lot to offer both businesses and residents that can be leveraged as advantages. The town’s **cultural and recreational amenities** include boating and golfing, as well as an appreciation of local history—through the Grafton Historical Museum, the Willard House and Clock Museum, and participation in the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor—that could form the basis of a tourism cluster. The **physical attractiveness** of Grafton is due in large part to the maintenance of existing property and open space. Taking the initiative to make an app that helps the town resolve code violations helps Grafton preserve this asset. The **local schools** have high achievement and **crime rates** are well below average. The strengths of the local government come at a very reasonable price tag as **local tax rates** are relatively competitive. Combined with the town’s relatively large quantity of **land** zoned for commercial and industrial uses, with some properties available in five-plus acre parcels, Grafton has much to offer current and prospective business firms.

Grafton also has a few distinct features that have helped drive growth and will continue to be a part of the town's foundation. Its **proximity to universities and research** attract and reinforce an educated workforce. Tufts Veterinary School, in North Grafton, is not only a strong employer but provides incubator space for companies that hire skilled labor. North Grafton also hosts the commuter **rail** stop, which currently has enough parking for 300 commuters, although it could be expanded: as prices in the Boston area continue to surge, commuters will look to towns like Grafton that have access to the city but can also avoid traffic on the Mass Pike. The commuter rail stop could also ground a transit-oriented-development strategy, both in the proximate environs and through improved bus service to the commuter rail to targeted neighborhoods. Finally Grafton's **website** is a cornerstone asset for recruiting new business. The website already contains a wealth of options for potential businesses as well as plenty of resources for its citizens, and it is updated weekly by a dedicated staff member. While there are a few upgrades that could be made, such as providing a checklist for permitting requirements and a flowchart for the process online, this should be seen as a major asset that Grafton should continue to invest in.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Grafton has a number of weaknesses, but luckily, most of them present clear opportunities to fix problems and turn negatives into a positives. First and foremost, Grafton may become "all hands on deck" when they are at risk of losing a firm, but clearly have a perception problem when it comes to friendliness to local businesses. The business community appears to have issues with planning board predictability, enforcement, and timeliness, which has become a sticking point for business leaders. A lack of **industry sensitivity** can really hurt a town. While attracting tech or life sciences companies may be the most attractive option for a town, car dealerships, manufacturing plants, and small local businesses such as dentist offices are often the base from which a town grows. Grafton must not allow itself to lose business because of a government that can't react to the needs of its business community. There are obvious steps to becoming more transparent such as providing **predictable permit processes**, but businesses that already reside in Grafton care less about this. Keeping an eye behind the drivers of higher **rent** in retail, general office and manufacturing would be prudent as the cost of doing business can be a deterrent for business development as well. Grafton officials should make sure that they communicate more with its businesses so that perceptions such as restrictive and inefficient planning board processes don't spiral out of control.

Marketing also appears to be a weakness for Grafton. The town clearly has a number of strengths, but without marketing, those strengths cannot be fully realized. The Grafton Science Park offers pre-permitting, and plenty of space for industrial growth, but the town should be more active about promoting this space. An **industrial attraction policy** could help to drive this initiative and help Grafton reach **critical mass firms**. Grafton has excellent **sites available**, but they are insufficiently promoted. This is not a case of If You Build It They Will Come. Successful economic development strategies engage stakeholders and potential businesses, and continue to engage them once they have opened shop. Once the town engages stakeholders, **marketing follow-up** is key. The Grafton Economic Development Commission could help move this process. The state makes a considerable investment in economic development; Grafton should take advantage of the **business incentives** that the state provides.

Grafton must also monitor its **housing** situation. Vacancy rates are low and this could have serious price implications in the future. The town's population has grown considerably in the last couple of decades, showing no signs of abating, and if supply is limited, rental and sales prices will increase. An increase in housing prices could deter business investment, stalling growth. There are a number of ways that the town could help alleviate this pressure, including the ways it manages **tax delinquent properties**. Far more important, housing supply should be increased through development of various housing types attentive to the needs not only of families but also to single workers and aging baby boomers.

Recommendations	Priority
Improve communication to current businesses and be proactive about the needs of businesses in your community.	High
Develop an economic development plan committed to cross-marketing, marketing follow-up, improved cluster development (“critical mass firms”), and an appropriate industrial attraction policy.	High
Address a potential housing shortage and rising prices through residential development and disposal of tax-delinquent properties at a faster clip.	Medium
Enhance the already valuable “Doing Business” section of the website with a permitting process flowchart and checklist.	Medium